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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [PGOV](#) [KE](#)
SUBJECT: FRACTURED LUHYA IN WESTERN PROVINCE
UNITING--AGAINST GOVERNMENT

REF: A. NAIROBI 0321
[1](#)B. 06 NAIROBI 5393

Classified By: Political Counselor Larry Andre for reasons
1.4 (b,d).

[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY: The diverse Luhya groups in Kenya's Western Province defy a single characterization. However, disillusionment with the current administration's failure to deliver on its campaign promises is creating fertile ground for eager opposition ODM-K campaigners. END SUMMARY.

Diverse Political Landscape -----

[1](#)2. (U) The Luhyas, accounting for approximately 14 percent of Kenya's population, are a diverse community with no less than 16 groups throughout Western Province with differing dialects, customs, and traditions. A number of Luhyas were quick to inform poloff, during a mid-April trip to Western Province, that they were not beholden to an idea of "Luhya Unity" such as that pursued by their homogenous and united Luo neighbors to the south (ref A).

[1](#)3. (U) Within the Luhya community, the Bukusu (centered primarily around Bungoma District) and the Maragoli (centered primarily around Sabatia District) comprise the largest groups. These two groups dominate the political landscape among the Luhyas and play important roles in determining the political destiny of Western Province.

FORD-K For All? Or For The Benefit Of Bukusus? -----

[1](#)4. (U) Bungoma District is the stronghold of the FORD-Kenya party, which has a disproportionately high number of Bukusu in its top leadership. Both Ministers Musikari Kombo (Local Government) and Mukhisa Kituyi (Trade Minister, formerly of FORD-K but recently aligned with NARC-Kenya) are from the Bukusu group. The predominance of the Bukusu over FORD-K politics has engendered some resentment among the under-represented Luhya groups, causing them to be somewhat more receptive to competing political parties. (NOTE: During the 2005 Constitutional Referendum, Bungoma District, with a largely Bukusu population, was the only district in Western Province to support the government-sponsored draft. The rest of Western voted against. END NOTE.)

ODM-K: A Popular Choice -----

15. (U) Musalia Mudavadi, former Vice President under Moi, and one of the current ODM-K presidential hopefuls, hails from the Maragoli group, and represents an alternative political choice for the Luhya in the form of ODM-K (FORD-Kenya's previous competitor for Luhya votes was LDP an ODM-K coalition member.) ODM-K appears to be gaining support among Western's Luyas. Poloff encountered another ODM-K aspirant for the Presidency, William Ruto (a Kalenjin from the Rift Valley), as he prepared his entourage (which included an expensive SUV and massive loud speakers) for a campaign rally in Busia. Several Busia contacts assured poloff that Ruto, representing ODM-K, would receive a very warm welcome, expected to draw almost twice the crowd as any NARC-Kenya politician. This is despite the fact that Vice President Moody Awori's (Narc-K) constituency being located in Busia District. (NOTE: The majority of Awori's home constituency voted against the government-backed draft constitution in the referendum. END NOTE)

16. (U) The Busia contacts also predicted that 90 percent of Western would vote for ODM-K, with the remaining 10 percent split in favor of FORD-K over Narc-Kenya. Vice President Moody Awori (formerly of LDP) and Trade Minister Kituyi may succeed in attracting some support for Narc-Kenya among their constituencies. The District Officer for Bungoma expressed concern about the potential for conflict between Kombo and Kituyi supporters during the upcoming elections, given the close proximity of their two constituencies.

2007 v. 2002: Bigger Carrots, More Crowded Field

17. (U) Several Luyas took a moment to explain to poloff that they expected this year's elections to differ from the elections in 2002 due to the higher stakes for candidates seeking a seat in Parliament. In 2002, members of Parliament (MPs) received a monthly salary of roughly 70,000 Kenyan Shillings (or slightly over 1,000 USD). Since entering Parliament, members have voted themselves a series of pay raises, resulting in the current salary of approximately 500,000 Kenyan Shillings (or over 7,000 USD) per month. While the previous meager 70,000 did little to lure successful businessmen and professionals into government service, the current remuneration is turning out to be quite a carrot.

18. (U) As a result, poloff was told, many more people will be enticed into contesting for parliamentary seats. The greater numbers of candidates contesting and the higher stakes for winners raises significant concerns about the heightened potential for conflict and electoral violence during this year's heated election campaigns.

19. (C) The Bungoma District Commissioner told poloff that abuse and misuse of Constituency Development Funds (CDF) by incumbent Members of Parliament is likely to cost many, in his estimate up to 60 percent, their seats in the coming election. He provided an example of a recent complaint filed with the police concerning nonexistent CDF assistance, in the form of school materials and equipment, which despite being recorded on paper as having been provided, in fact never reached the intended schools. The alleged culprit? None other than Trade Minister Kituyi, a man widely reported to have enjoyed a monumental increase in his wealth since ascending to his ministership. (COMMENT: we cannot corroborate this account, and know of no evidence of wrongdoing by Kituyi. The case is now in the courts. END COMMENT.)

Government Sows Lofty Promises, Reaps Disappointment

110. (SBU) The overwhelming sentiment expressed to poloff throughout the province indicates that the Luyha communities are disappointed by the failure of the NARC government to deliver on their lofty election promises. Luyas explained

that expectations were raised unrealistically high, with promises of a new constitution within 100 days and the creation of 500,000 new jobs per year. Current economic growth, at about 6 percent per year, has not trickled down to benefit the common Luhya. While many acknowledge that some MPs have used CDF funds wisely, this positive development is usually attributed to the MP and not the government. Throughout the province, poloff observed a lack of electricity and running water, poor roads, decrepit bridges, and people struggling against poverty. Apart from free primary education, the common Luhya, it was explained to poloff, does not feel that he or she is better off than he or she was in 2002. This lack of improvement in the lives of the ordinary Luhya appears to make them more receptive to supporting an alternative to the current government, primarily in the form of ODM-K.

¶11. (SBU) COMMENT: Thus far, Kombo has kept his cards to himself, giving no indication as to whether he will align the weight of his FORD-Kenya party, and the significant numbers of loyal FORD-Kenya voters, with either ODM-K or NARC-K. As a member of Kibaki's administration, and after having insisted on and won greater Luyha representation in the December 2005 cabinet reshuffle (even going so far as to refuse his ministership until his demands were met), Kombo has several reasons to support Narc-K. However, he may find the pro-ODM-K sentiment sweeping Western Province to be an opportunity not to be missed in this year's election.

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